UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/24551
12 September 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

LETTER DATED 10 SEPTEMBER 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 10 September 1992 from Mr. Mohammed Said al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, concerning intervention to end the practices engaged in by the Sanctions Committee.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOUN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 10 September 1992 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to our letter dated 7 August 1992, in which we urged you to intervene to end the practices engaged in by the Sanctions Committee, which are designed to inflict the greatest possible harm on the people of Iraq by preventing basic civilian items from reaching them. This is a result of the arbitrary and unwarranted positions imposed on the Committee, usually by three of its members, namely, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France.

The continued functioning of the Committee in the present manner can only tarnish the reputation of the Organization and undermine its credibility, which is now subject to suspicion and doubt on the part of many countries of the world. This is done out of deference to a small group of countries which are striving, directly and indirectly, to oppress and harm the Iraqi people, a situation which has had clear repercussions on people in all walks of life, as has been stressed in the reports of all the humanitarian organizations and international missions which have visited Iraq.

The silence in the face of the conduct of some States members of the Committee has reached a point where it can only be interpreted as a deliberate stance and a relinquishment of responsibility for the crimes that are being committed against Iraq and the Iraqi people. These iniquitous attitudes are setting a dangerous precedent of inflicting harm on peoples, and these attitudes and procedures are likewise immoral and incompatible with the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

What took place at the 76th meeting of the Sanctions Committee, which was held on 3 September 1992, warrants close consideration; it reflects the injustice, the prejudices and the arbitrariness being directed against Iraq and its people by certain States which, on every pretext and with all manner of excuses, are obstructing the delivery of basic humanitarian items to the Iraqi people. What has been reflected, clearly and unequivocally, is that a majority of the members of the Committee are not in agreement with the policy of these States regarding the adoption of decisions by the Committee. This is because of the manner in which these States present their excuses and pretexts, with implicit contempt for the rights of others, in implementation of preconcerted policies designed to inflict the greatest possible harm on Iraq and its people.

The incidents which most clearly illustrate the use of these methods in the Committee are as follows:

1. The representative of the United Kingdom objected to a proposal for a Pakistani company to supply Iraq with 10,000 extractor fans, on the grounds that these items would strengthen the Iraqi industrial infrastructure, without

explaining how they would do so. The most appropriate comment on this is the one made by the representative of Ecuador, who said that he saw no danger in providing Iraq with such fans.

2. The United Kingdom and United States representatives objected to the proposed supply to Iraq of plate glass and cement, also without citing any plausible arguments; this, in turn, prompted objections from the representatives of Ecuador, Morocco and Zimbabwe, who insisted on the need for States to present valid and convincing reasons for objecting to the export of any item to Iraq. The representative of one State pointed out that the members of the Committee had reached an agreement in this area, and that some of the objections raised had become a source of ridicule and irony.

Iraq endorsed the request by some States members of the Committee that States which had objections should show respect for the other members of the Committee by presenting plausible arguments and explanations, so that the Committee's decisions would no longer be subject to ridicule; that situation cannot be allowed to continue, and we are certain that you must likewise disapprove of the decisions of a United Nations body lending themselves to such treatment.

3. The United Kingdom representative objected to a proposal for a company to supply Iraq with 550 tons of metal bars to be used in the manufacture of medical furnishings and hospital beds, claiming that such items would strengthen Iraq's industrial capacity, and requested information on the end-user of the material; this prompted one of the members of the Committee to ask ironically who, indeed, was the patient who was to sleep in that bed.

Here we must ask: is this the manner in which Iraq's industrial infrastructure is to be developed? Is it a goal of the United Nations to destroy Iraq's civilian infrastructure? And are hospital beds part of this infrastructure? We leave it to the members of the Committee to answer these questions.

4. The representative of the United States further objected to a proposal to export 3,700 children's bicycles to Iraq. The said representative made the ridiculous claim that these bicycles did not constitute a humanitarian need, whereupon the representatives of several other States replied that the bicycles should be regarded as a humanitarian item by any standard, because of the humanitarian, moral and spiritual duty to meet the needs of children whatever those needs might be; they requested the United States representative to transmit their views to his Government. The presiding officer then said that, as Acting Chairman of the Committee, he could not allow the adoption of a decision denying permission to export children's bicycles for the reasons stated by the United States representative.

Is this the treatment deserved by God's creatures on Earth, who have suffered so much from the aerial bombardment by the United States and its allies, which destroyed plants producing milk for them, their schools and their homes?

We urge you once again, most emphatically, to use your good offices and to act firmly to halt the practices taking place in the Sanctions Committee, which are incompatible with all humanitarian values and concepts, and which, having evoked indignation and scorn from the Iraqi people and from all honest people in the world, have begun to elicit irony and ridicule from the Committee members themselves. This bitter, shameful and reprehensible situation which has been forced on the Sanctions Committee reflects negatively on the reputation and credibility of the Organization, of which my country is proud to be a founding Member.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Iraq